



The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer

Jackson J. Benson

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The works of John Steinbeck are among the best known and best loved in American literature. In short books such as Of Mice and Men and The Long Valley and in the epics The Grapes of Wrath and East of Eden, Steinbeck created characters that have touched readers around the world for years. But while thousands have come to know and acclaim his fiction, few really know the man himself; although Steinbeck appeared in the public spotlight, he was a shy, private individual who felt that attention should be focused on his work rather than on himself. In this volume, Jackson Benson, who had full access to Steinbeck's papers and photographs and who interviewed scores of individuals in his decade of research for this book, reveals the dimensions of the man and the events of his life as he pursued his artistic vocation. Above all, Steinbeck was a writer. From his youth in California's Salinas Valley, through his college days at Stanford, to the early success of Tortilla Flat, Benson notes the influences on Steinbeck's later novels, which were to become celebrated as archetypal depictions of American culture. In exploring the environments that were so important to Steinbeck, from California's valleys and waterfront to New York's East Side, Benson allows us to feel the attachment Steinbeck had for these places and for the people who lived in them. These humanistic concerns were the underpinning of a life that included notoriety and celebrity: Steinbeck was attacked by the Right for his depiction of the plight of migrant workers and his campaigns for the rights of the "little people," and by the Left for his failure to embrace communism and for his stand on the Vietnam War; he wrote Hollywood film scripts and won the Nobel Prize for literature. Benson's interpretive biography recounts these details with unprecedented depth and brings to life an extraordinary writer whose love for people, places, and writing earned him an esteem unparalleled in American literature.



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